

# Bacterial Vaginosis

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV) is one of the most common vaginal infections. It occurs when the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina is disrupted.

## Signs and Symptoms

- Some women do not have symptoms.
- Unpleasant vaginal odor
- Abnormal discharge from the vagina, usually a white or gray color

## What is BV?

- BV occurs when there is a disturbance in the normal balance of bacteria in the vagina. Why this happens is not known. You are more likely to get BV if you:
  - Have a new sex partner or multiple sex partners
  - Douche
  - Use an IUD (intrauterine device) for birth control

## Prevention

- Abstain from vaginal sex.
- Use condoms or barriers consistently and correctly during vaginal sex.
- Limit number of sex partners.
- Do not douche.
- Do not have sex until you are done with treatment, even if symptoms go away.

## Treatment

- See a health care provider for an exam and tests to figure out diagnosis and best treatment.
- Treatment is medicines (antibiotics) prescribed by a health care provider.
- Male partners do not need to be treated.
- BV often comes back after treatment. Consistent condom use may decrease how often BV recurs.

## If Not Treated

- May increase risk for getting HIV and other STDs
- May increase the chance of passing HIV to a sex partner
- Possible problems if a woman is pregnant
- Increased risk of getting PID after a surgery such as a hysterectomy or an abortion

## Help Stop the Spread of BV

- Refrain from vaginal sex if you have symptoms.
- Seek medical care, including STD tests.
- Do not have any sex until you are done with treatment.
- Take all medicines prescribed, even after your symptoms go away.

For more information about STDs  
or for getting tested and treated,  
visit our web site...

[www.kingcounty.gov/health/std](http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/std)

Public Health  
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